

Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS)

Policy Committee Meeting

Friday, September 7, 2018

10:00 a.m.

TCL New River Campus, Conference Room

**Policy Committee Members Present:**

Chairman Lisa Sulka, Mayor, Town of Bluffton  
Paul Sommerville, Beaufort County  
David Bennett, Mayor, Town of Hilton Head Island  
Samuel E. Murray, Mayor, Town of Port Royal  
Harry Williams, Mayor, City of Hardeeville  
Mike McFee, Council and Mayor *pro term*, City of Beaufort

**Policy Committee Members Absent:**

Barbara Clark, Jasper County Council  
Sam Glover, SCDOT Commission  
Rep. Bill Herbkersman, Jasper County Leg. Delegation  
Chairman  
Richard Hamilton, LRTA Board Chair  
David Spisso, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Hardeeville

**Technical Committee Members:**

Lisa Wagner, Planning Director, Jasper County  
Colin Kinton, Chair, Beaufort County  
Carolyn Kassel, City of Hardeeville  
Katie Woodruff, Planner, City of Hardeeville  
Kevin Icard, Planner, Town of Bluffton  
Shawn Colin, Planner, Town of Hilton Head  
Anne Cyran, Planner Town of Hilton Head  
Kraig Gordon, Chair, Beaufort County CTC  
Neil Parson, City of Hardeeville  
Aron Williams, City of Hardeeville  
John McCann, Town of Hilton Head  
Tom Lennox, Town of Hilton Head  
Van Willis, Town of Port Royal

**Technical Committee Members Absent:**

Lauren Kelly, Planner, City of Beaufort  
Linda Bridges, Planning Director, Town of Port Royal  
Mary Lou Franzoni, LRTA Executive Director

**LCOG Staff Present:**

Sabrena Graham, LCOG Director  
Ginnie Kozak, Planning Director  
Christian Dammel, Planning Assistant

**SCDOT Staff Present:**

Megan Groves, Program Management  
Jennifer Necker, SCDOT  
David Gray, SCDOT  
Wade Luther, SCDOT  
Jim Frierson, SCDOT Office of Public Transportation  
Betsy McCall, Design Manager

**Others Present:**

Emily Swearingen, AECOM  
Rochelle Garrett, AECOM  
Bill Jordan, AECOM  
Jennifer Ray, Town of Hilton Head Island  
Kelly Farabee, Wolverton & Associates Consulting Firm  
Tom Kennedy, Beaufort County  
Rob McFee, Beaufort County  
Mark Wilkes, Coastal Region MPO Savannah  
Joe Crowley, Lowcountry Inside Track  
Joe Fragale, Greater Island Council  
Michael Dennis, Ramey Kemp  
Alec Snyder, The Island Packet  
Michelle Dennis, Ramey Kemp and associates??  
John Boyle, Finance Director Palmetto Breeze Transit  
Designee for Richard Hamilton

## AGENDA

### 1. Call to Order.

- a. Pledge of Allegiance
- b. Invocation
- c. Introduction of Members, Guests and Staff
- d. Designees
- e. Action on July 13, 2018 Meeting Minutes postponed until the October 19<sup>th</sup> meeting (Draft minutes attached.)

### 2. Old Business.

- a. SCDOT US 278 and US 17 Project Update  
ACTION: Information

Jennifer Necker provided a brief update on the US 278 and 17 projects, the handout pertaining to the items covered can be found [here](#) . To date, 60 percent of the structures seismic evaluation has been completed for the US 278 project, with an overall surveying completion percent of 35. Additionally, there has been no change from the previous months' preliminary traffic counts, which is roughly 15%. Ms. Necker went on to state that the NEPA letter of intent has been distributed to various environmental groups, as well as those who may have an interest in the project. The first public information meeting to introduce as well as gather information from the public will take place on September 27<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Head High School from 6 to 8 pm. In order to raise public awareness and interest, Ms. Sulka inquired about obtaining an email that could be utilized for an email blast to bolster the current efforts of raising awareness. Ms. Kozak will receive said email and forward it to the other members. Ms. Necker proceeded to provide a brief overview on US 17, which is in the immediate acquisition phase and near design completion. SCDOT is awaiting the army core of engineer's approval, which only needs to hear the comments from the Savannah River Wildlife group before doing so. The permit approval is anticipated to transpire this year with construction beginning in June 2019.

- b. Beaufort County Project Update—Colin Kinton  
ACTION: Information

Mr. Kinton reported that the Boundary Street project has been completed. 95% of the plans for the 278/Jenkins Island project were submitted September 9th to SCDOT and a field review is to be scheduled within the next two weeks. An application has been submitted to Federal Highways and the award notifications are expected to come back in early December. The contract is going out to bid this fall and is expected to be awarded at the end of this year or at the beginning of next year, with construction to begin in winter.

Mr. Kinton gave updates on the 278 Signal System Initiative as well. The HHI Traffic Signal Re-Timing project is currently underway, with data collection to begin in the coming weeks. This project is scheduled to be completed by the end of the month, as well as the analysis of the results. The portion of the project for 278 on the mainland has been completed. In summary, the changes in signal timing resulted in an 8% decreased in travel time during peak hours and a 39% decrease in delay. The implementation of the Adaptive Traffic Signal System project for 278 between Hampton Parkway and Moss Creek is still underway and they are currently waiting for the suppliers to return in October. The final reports will be submitted by the County Transportation Committee and the Beaufort County Council at the time of the projects' completion.

Mr. Kinton continued to touch on several other projects and their current statuses. The Bluffton Parkway/Hampton Parkway signal is nearing completion but has encountered a delay due to a few technical difficulties with the detection devices. The three Mast Arm Rebuilds in the city of Beaufort were awarded to a contractor which should mobilize in the coming weeks. The Ribaut Road at Parris Avenue signal rebuild in the city of Port Royal is nearing completion. And finally, the WK Alston Connection road/Cross Creek Shopping Center project is underway in conjunction with SCDOT's US 21/SC 170 Safety Project.

c. Beaufort County Referendum Update—Rob McFee  
ACTION: Information

Mr. McFee began discussing the brochure that will be distributed to the public that discusses the 1% sales tax referendum. He pointed out the key components such as the delegation of funds, the numerous benefits and projects that will be affected by the referendum, as well as the questions that will be posed to the voters on the ballot in November. The County website has a large amount of information on the referendum for reference. Mr. Summerville made a comment about the language on the referendum, most notably, the possible confusion about the phrase “gives the county the ability to bond” and it's potential to deter voters. The elimination of this language is to be discussed with the Council on Monday, unless a compelling argument can be made for it to remain. Sen. Tom Davis agreed with Mr. Sommerville about the elimination being beneficial.

After a question from Ms. Sulka about where to find specific project information that the referendum will affect, Mr. McFee recommended the Penny Referendum section on the Beaufort County website, where information and FAQs can be found. There, the ballot question is posted, along with a list of projects, as well as a copy of the brochure. A map will be added in the near future as a visual aid. NPS Strategies oversees their educational outreach.

d. Jasper Ocean Terminal Update—Sen. Tom Davis  
ACTION: Information

Sen. Tom Davis spoke on the current complications plaguing the Jasper Ocean Terminal Port. The RECENT announcement made by the SCPA that the Charleston port would reach capacity at 2035 came as a surprise to the GPA, which estimated that the Savannah port would reach its capacity in 2028. Sen. Davis stated that the GPA has raised as to whether they could rely on the Ocean Terminal as a viable option before they reach their capacity. As a result, the GPA has begun assessing other viable options. Sen. Davis stated that he aims to prevent these coming to fruition by assuring them that they can rely on SC and its commitment to this project. To demonstrate this, Sen. Tom Davis is seeking to assemble a reoccurring appropriation from the SC general fund to pay for the necessary infrastructure, such as the port access road, rail corridor easements, expansions and new exits along I-95, etc. He went on to state that he has already spoken with the governor and the chairman of finance about these recurring appropriations and has been assured verbally that it will come to fruition. He went on to state, however, that Georgia would need to match these financial commitments and coordination between the two states would be imperative. A conference call between the legislators in July will result in a meeting with the Southern Carolina Alliance, Department of Commerce, and the States Port Authority, which will be held on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. Sen. Tom Davis also said there will be a meeting held on October 10<sup>th</sup> with the South Carolina Port Authority oversight committee, which he is a part of, to explore whether the South Carolina Port Authority had discharged its 2009 statutory directive to “expeditiously” develop the Jasper Port. Mayor Bennett inquired whether the SCPA or another entity is supposed to be the driving force behind the development of the access road, railroad, etc. Sen. Tom Davis responded saying the two port authorities had a contract with Moffatt and Nichols, but a different consulting firm is working on the project now. Additionally, the port authorities have also hired

two law firms, one in Columbia and one in Atlanta. Mr. Fragale asked Sen. Davis whether it was accurate that the infrastructure expenses such as the road and rail spur are entirely South Carolina's responsibility. Sen. Davis responded saying that he has heard GA say that and such has investigated it and while it's accurate that GA cannot spend money on SC infrastructure, if the infrastructure is directly related to a project that they have an interest in they would be able to.

### 3. New Business.

#### a. Interstate 95 Regional Interchange Analysis Update Presentation—AECOM ACTION: Information

AECOM was hired by Lowcountry Council of Governments Planning department to assess and analyze the interchanges along I-95 in the Jasper, Hampton, and Colleton Counties for a study LCOG is currently conducting. The presentation by AECOM illustrated what kind of improvements would be needed to accommodate large distribution centers, manufacturing centers, etc. at these particular interchanges. To view AECOM's presentation, please click on the following [link](#).

### 4. Other Business.

Ms. Kozak announced the statewide COG-MPO conference October 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> at City Hall in Beaufort. This conference will host statewide transportation planners and staff. Case studies on projects from across the state will be presented, as well as presentations from AECOM. The invitations to this event will be sent out shortly.

Ms. Sulka brought to the group's attention that she has met with several new small businesses and restaurant employers in the Bluffton and Beaufort area. These employers expressed concerns about their employees' difficulty accessing and utilizing the LRTA routes. The current routes do not sufficiently meet the needs of employers and their qualified employees. Ms. Sulka posed the possibility of having one of these owners or employers come to a meeting and explain the situation in more detail. Ms. Kozak suggested that this discussion take place at the next meeting when AECOM will be discussing increase services for the smaller urban area (Bluffton/Hilton Head). Mayor Bennet agreed that this is an important issue that needs to be solved and said that a part of the problem is that some employees are being cut off by the timing of the last route. He suggested that a plan could be put in place to have routes organized to and from multiple places of employment in order to serve their employees.

### 5. Public Comment Period.

Joe Fragale from SunCity spoke about the coalition that has been formed that is raising funds alongside the Hilton Head Chamber, the Beaufort Chamber (and has spoken with the Bluffton Chamber) to promote the passage of the 1% tax referendum. He spoke on how traffic as well as the difficulty to travel in Beaufort county has a domino effect on affordable housing and economic growth. To explain the referendum and build support for it, a 20-minute presentation, a one-page summary, and a 27 FAQ's page have all been created. The Coalition has worked closely with Josh Gruber and Steve Riley of Hilton Head and many others to ensure the accuracy of the information they present. Mr. Fragale went on to explain that twelve presentations are lined up with many others to come. Additionally, a PR representative will be publicizing these presentations to spread awareness as they have done in the past.

### 6. Next Meeting. Friday, October 19, 2018.

### 7. ADJOURN.